

South Dakota National Guard

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SD National Guard selects Lieutenant of the Year

RAPID CITY, S.D. - The South Dakota National Guard selected 1st Lt. Justin Allbee, of Watertown, as its Lieutenant of the Year and recipient of the Lt. Col. John J. Steele Award.

Allbee, who serves as a signal officer with Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion, received the award as the most exceptional lieutenant after competing against lieutenants from several of the SDNG's major commands.

"Lieutenant Allbee has worked hard to ensure the communications section is at a high state of readiness, as well as ensuring the battalion remains at a high state of communications readiness," said Capt. Paul Giovanetti, HHB, 1-147th commander. "He has proven his high level of proficiency in any task given to him in this battalion."

The Lt. Col. John J. Steele Award was established in 1968 to annually recognize the most outstanding lieutenant in the SDNG. Selection is based on exceptional qualities of leadership, values and performance.

"I am genuinely humbled. It is an honor not only to be selected from the 1-147th but the 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade and also the great state of South Dakota for this award," said Albee. "I am incredibly grateful I was allowed to compete and selected as the Lieutenant of the Year for 2020."

Allbee is a 2012 graduate of Minnesota State University Moorhead, where he earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Graphic Communications. On the civilian side, Allbee is the president at Gator Liftgates, LLC of Watertown, where he oversees company operations, production, sales, engineering, marketing, accounting, and human resources.

Other officers representing their major command for this year's award competition were 1st Lt. Jacob Erpenbach from the 114th Fighter Wing and 2nd Lt. Cole Huber from the 109th Regional Support Group.

Although receiving Lieutenant of the Year honors is a huge accomplishment for Allbee, he is also proud of what the award represents beyond himself.

"The 147th Field Artillery Battalion collectively is a prestigious unit that has a long history of serving the country and South Dakota," said Allbee. "We take care of soldiers, and we take care of one another. The award is not a reflection of me but a representation of my leaders, mentors, and, most importantly, all of the soldiers that have taught me what makes a great leader."

Allbee credits his family for making this award possible, as well as his military career.

"This award, and quite frankly, my entire career would not be possible without the support from my wife, Carmen, and my two sons Atlas and Porter," said Albee. "They are always the driving force for what I do;

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I am always appreciative of their encouragement. I still have a long road to travel in my career, but it always nice to find some recognition that you are doing something right along the way.”

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U.S. Army 1st Lt. Justin Allbee: Lt. Col. John J. Steele Award recipient and South Dakota National Guard Lieutenant of the Year (U.S. Army National Guard file photo)

FOR MORE INFORMATION, please contact the SDNG Public Affairs Office at (605) 737-6721 or e-mail ng.sd.sdarng.list.pao@mail.mil